We Claim:

1. In a communication system including a first base transceiver station (BTS) providing communication coverage of a first area and a second BTS providing communication coverage of a second area, a method of removing the first BTS from the communication system while maintaining communication coverage of both first and second areas, the method comprising the steps of:

transmitting a first signal from a first BTS having a first signal strength;

transmitting a second signal from a second BTS having a second signal strength, the first signal strength of the first signal in the first area being greater than the second signal strength of the second signal in the first area;

receiving a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system; and

reducing the first signal strength of the first signal until the second signal strength of the second signal in the first area is greater than the first signal strength of the first signal in the first area to cause a subscriber unit communicatively coupled to the first BTS to remove communicative coupling with the first BTS and establish communicative coupling with the second BTS.

2. The method of claim 1, further including the step of increasing a transmission rate of an active data packet transmission from the first BTS via unused traffic channels.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the step of increasing the transmission rate of the active data packet transmission from the first BTS further includes transmitting the active data packet transmission via unused traffic channels normally reserved for voice calls.

4. The method of claim 1, further including the step of transmitting a message adapted to be received by a second subscriber unit in the first area to delay attempts to establish communicative coupling with a communication network until the second signal strength of the second signal in the first area is greater than the first signal strength of the first signal in the first area.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of transmitting the message adapted to be received by the second subscriber unit further includes transmitting the message via a control channel.

6. The method of claim 1, further including the steps of identifying a malfunction in the operation of the first BTS and issuing a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system further includes receiving an operator command to remove the first BTS from the communication system.

8. The method of claim 1, further including the step of transmitting a list including at least one BTS neighboring the first BTS.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein the step of transmitting a list including at least one BTS neighboring the first BTS further includes transmitting an updated list including at least one BTS neighboring the first BTS prior to the step of reducing the first signal strength of the first signal.

10. In a communication system including a first base transceiver station (BTS) providing communication coverage of a first area and a second BTS providing communication coverage of a second area, an apparatus for removing the first BTS from the communication system while maintaining communication coverage of both first and second areas, the apparatus comprising:

a first BTS adapted to transmit a first signal having a first signal strength;

a second BTS adapted to transmit a second signal having a second signal strength, the first signal strength of the first signal in the first area being greater than the second signal strength of the second signal in the first area;

a controller responsive to a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system and which issues a command to the first BTS to reduce the first signal strength of the first signal until the second signal strength of the second signal in the first area is greater than the first signal strength of the first signal in the first area to cause a subscriber unit communicatively coupled to a first BTS to remove communicative coupling with the first BTS and establish communicative coupling with the second BTS.

11. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the first BTS is adapted to increase a transmission rate of an active data packet transmission via unused traffic channels.

12. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the first BTS is adapted to increase a transmission rate of an active data packet transmission via unused traffic channels normally reserved for voice calls.

13. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the first BTS is adapted to transmit a message adapted to be received by a second subscriber unit in the first area to delay attempts to establish communicative coupling with a communication network until the second signal strength of the second signal in the first area is greater than the first signal strength of the first signal in the first area.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the first BTS is adapted to transmit the message via a control channel.

15. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the controller is adapted to issue a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system in response to the detection of a malfunction in the operation of the first BTS.

16. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the controller is adapted to issue a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system in response to an operator command.

17. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the first BTS is adapted to transmit a list including at least one BTS neighboring the first BTS.

18. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the controller issues a command to the first BTS to transmit an updated list including at least one BTS neighboring the first BTS in response to a command to remove the first BTS from the communication system.

19. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the controller comprises a base station controller (BSC).

20. The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the controller comprises a BTS controller.